

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 00458 190016Z
ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 ISO-00 EUR-12 AGRE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00
STR-06 L-03 OMB-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /050 W
-----050400 191036Z /15

R 182241Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2191

UNCLAS CANBERRA 458

STATE PASS AGRICULTURE FOR FAS AND APHIS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, AS
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS ON U.S. HORSES AND
BEEF

1. THE AMBASSADOR AND THE AGATTACHE CALLED ON MR. RALPH HUNT, MINISTER FOR HEALTH, FOR THE PURPOSE OF URGING PROMPT CONSIDERATION OF OUR PROTOCOL COVERING THE DIRECT SHIPMENT OF HORSES FROM THE US TO AUSTRALIA, THUS ELIMINATING THE 60 DAY QUARANTINE PERIOD IN THE UK. WE POINTED OUT THAT THE UK QUARANTINE WAS NOT ONLY OBSOLETE, BUT IT MORE THAN DOUBLED THE COST OF SHIPPING OUR HORSES TO AUSTRALIA.

2. WE ASKED MR. HUNT IF HIS DEPARTMENT WAS HAVING ANY PROBLEMS WITH OUR PROTOCOL ON THIS MATTER. HIS TWO ANIMAL QUARANTINE OFFICERS BOTH ASSURED US THAT ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN AND NOTED THAT THE PRESENCE OF CONTAGIOUS EQUINE METRITIS IN THE UK HAD PUT SOME URGENCY ON THE MATTER. THEY COUTIONED THAT SOME LOOSE ENDS STILL NEEDED TO BE TIED DOWN TO THE SATISFACTION OF STATE VETERINARIANS. WE SAID IT WAS OUR DESIRE THAT THE PROTOCOL BE FINALIZED IN TIME SO THAT DIRECT SHIPMENTS COULD START BY THE WINTER OF 1978. MR. HUNT ASSURED US HE WOULD GIVE THE MATTER HIS PERSONAL ATTENTION, AND FELT THAT OUR REQUEST COULD BE MET, BARRING ANY UNFORSEEN PROBLEMS.

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3. WE THEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF AUSTRALIA'S BAN ON IMPORTS OF US FROZEN BEEF. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE US IS THE BIGGEST MARKEET FOR AUSTRALIAN BEEF, YET WE CANNOT SELL ONE POUND OF OUR BEEF TO AUSTRALIA. MR. HUNT SAID THAT WHILE THE BAN WAS BASICALLY AN ANIMAL HEALTH PROBLEM AND ONE HIS DEPARTMENT WAS REVIEWING, HE ADMITTED IT DOES HAVE SOME POLITICAL OVERTONES.

HE ASSURED US THAT HIS DEPARTMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO STUDY THE
POSSIBILITY OF LIFTING THIS BAN AND WOULD KEEP US INFORMED OF
THE PROGRESS.

4. COMMENT: WE ARE RATHER OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR
PROPOSAL ON DIRECT SHIPMENT OF HORSES, BUT NOT SO SANGUINE ABOUT
THE PROSPECTS FOR OUR BEEF. IN OUR OPINION POLITICS WILL BE A
MAJOR PROBLEM IN REMOVING THIS ARBITRARY BARRIER.
ALSTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HORSES, MEATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CANBER00458
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780028-0640
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780151/aaaabqzn.tel
Line Count: 71
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 89b8cfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3757592
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS ON U.S. HORSES AND BEEF
TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/89b8cfe2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014